

Participatory citizenship: Critical perspectives on client-centred occupational therapy

HETTY FRANSEN¹, NICK POLLARD², SARAH KANTARTZIS³ & INÉS VIANA-MOLDES⁴

¹Department of Occupational Therapy, Ecole Supérieure des Sciences et Techniques de la Santé de Tunis, University of Tunis El Manar, Tunis, Tunisia,

²Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK,

³Division of Occupational Therapy and Arts Therapies, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, UK, and

⁴Department of Health Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of A Coruña, La Coruna, Spain

Abstract

Background/aims: This article aims to discuss client-centred practice, the current dominant approach within occupational therapy, in relation to participatory citizenship. Occupational therapists work within structures and policies that set boundaries on their engagement with clients, while working with complex, multidimensional social realities. **Methods:** The authors present a critical discussion shaped by their research, including a survey, discussions at workshops at international conferences, and critical engagement with the literature on occupational therapy, occupation, and citizenship. **Conclusion:** A focus on citizenship suggests reframing professional development based on the participation in public life of people as citizens of their society. While occupational therapists often refer to clients in the context of communities, groups, families, and wider society, the term clientcentred practice typically represents a particular view of the individual and may sometimes be too limited in application for a more systemic and societal approach. **Significance:** The authors question the individual focus which has, until recently, been typical of client-centred occupational therapy. Placing citizenship at the core of intervention is a transformative process that assumes all people are citizens and conceives of health as a collective issue, influencing the way we educate, do research, and practise.

Key words: Collective, dis-citizenship, inequalities, professional development, participation, paradigms, occupational justice